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Mr. S M I T H's
A S S I Z E
S E R M O N

Preach'd at

L A N C A S T E R,

On *Thursday*, July 31, 1746.

[Price Six-Pence.]

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Mr. S. M. T. H. S.

A S S I Z E

S E R M O N



L A N C A S T E R

On Thursday, July 31, 1746.

[Price Six-Pence.]

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*The Gospel an actual Friend to the
Liberties of Mankind.*

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A S S I Z E
S E R M O N

Preach'd at

LANCASTER,

Before the HONOURABLE

Sir THOMAS DENNISON, *Knt.*

One of the Justices of the King's-Bench,

And the HONOURABLE

CHARLES CLARKE, *Esq.*

One of the Barons of the Exchequer,

On Thursday the 31st Day of July, 1746.

By WILLIAM SMITH, A.M.

Rector of the Parish of the *Holy Trinity* in *Chester*,
and Chaplain to the Right Honourable the
Earl of *Derby*.

L O N D O N:

Printed for WILLIAM SANDBY, at the *Ship* over-
against *St. Dunstan's Church*, in *Fleet-street*, and
Sold by THOMAS LEDSHAM, Bookeller, in
Chester.

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Cape-st.

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T O
WILLIAM SHAW, *Esq.*

HIGH-SHERIFF of the County-Palatine
of *Lancaster*,

And the GENTLEMEN of the *Grand-jury*.

T H I S
D I S C O U R S E,

Publish'd at their Command,

is humbly inscrib'd by

their most obedient Servant,

WILLIAM SMITH.

WILLIAM SHAW, Esq.

High Sheriff of the County of London
of London

And the Gentlemen of the County of London

DISCOURSE

Printed at their Command

is humbly submitted by

WILLIAM SHAW, Esq.

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St. JOHN, viii. 32.

--Ye shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free.

OUR Blessed Saviour, in the passage before us, is proving to his audience the divinity of his Mission, and pointing out the superior excellence of his own Gospel.—In the former view, He asserteth—that, He delivereth nothing to them, but what his Father, his heavenly Father, the God of order, truth and righteousness taught him, v. 26.—that, his actions were exactly uniform with his doctrine, since He “always did those things that pleased the Father; v. 29.” so consequently, that all He taught, and all He did were concurring proofs of his Mission. In the latter view He sheweth, v. 31.—that “to be his Disciples indeed,

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“they

"they must continue in his word," must enlighten and enlarge their understandings by what He taught, must order their steps and conduct in life by the rules which He prescribed ;—and afterwards assureth them, by way of encouragement, and most animating most enlivening encouragement too, that then " they should know the " Truth, and the Truth should make " them free."

It appeareth from hence, that it was the peculiar genius and tendency of the Gospel of Christ, to diffuse the light and knowledge of Truth, of Truth in general, of every Truth conducing to the welfare, glory and happiness of reasonable, social, accountable creatures ;—and, that the consequence of Truth thus beamed and diffused abroad, must be Liberty or Freedom. The Religion of Christ is founded in Truth, and the knowledge of Truth is the basis of human Liberty,—of Liberty, in every sense that can justly carry with it an idea of substantial worth and value, and

and which is consistent with or can promote a moral government—that government, by which the eternally wise and just and beneficent Being must reign in the understandings and affections of his intelligent creation,

To know the Truth, the Truth delivered in the Gospel of Christ, or the laws of the moral government of the great Creator, Parent and Benefactor of accountable creatures—to have the conviction of it firmly and indelibly struck upon the mind—must give that life and energy to the practice, that right actions will be the consequence of right wills, and “the service of God” be shewn in fact and experience, what it cannot be denied to be in cool reflection and the maturest judgment—to be, I say, “the most perfect freedom” of which mortals are capable. To will always what is right, and to do always right, is the Liberty of God. His knowledge is immense, and his wisdom infinite, so that from his liberty must per-

fect righteousness, justice, and goodness eternally beam. The knowledge of man is limited, and his will can exert itself only in some certain proportion to his understanding and knowledge. But, the more he studieth the Religion of Christ, the greater knowledge of Truth he gaineth; of that active, substantial, useful Truth, which vindicateth and guardeth the freedom of his will, and invigorateth all his outward acts with that liberty, without which all moral government, all social happiness, all private virtue must be weakened and impaired.

If such freedom therefore be the glorious result of the truth and knowledge to be gained from the pure uncorrupted doctrine of Christ—freedom, which exempteth from every enemy to our souls, our virtue, our social, our private welfare;—it followeth, that if Truth be darkened, if that knowledge be driven and chased away, the opposite of Freedom, that is Slavery or Thralldom, will in proportion

portion take place; clouding the understanding, restraining all free exertion of the will, delivering up the glory of rational accountable Beings to be a prey to every enemy, and to all kinds of bondage those enemies can rivet upon them.

That the Truth of the Gospel delivereth accountable men from spiritual thralldom, from the bondage of sin and Satan, and rescueth them into "the glorious liberty of the children of God"—every understanding Christian knoweth. I shall only remark on this occasion, that it is the genius of the Gospel to deliver men in a collective capacity, or gathered together in what we call a Community, from any of those thralldoms to which communities are subject—from "spiritual tyranny in high places," from superstition, the engine of tyranny, from wanton and insolent invasions of those rights and privileges, to which the God of order and the God of nature hath given them an unalienable title.

Proofs of this are all those precepts in Holy Writ, which injoin "all men to be knit together in the bonds of affection and love;" which teach them to "be in subjection one to another; to honour one another;" which display the relative duties in full force and obligation, allowing no exemption or independance, but teaching every tie between any two relations to be mutual and reciprocal, between poor and rich, between high and low, between parent and child, between governor and governed. As in the world of matter all bodies mutually act and are re-acted upon by one another, so in the moral and the Christian estimate of things, all obligations are mutual and reciprocally bind and inforce each other.

Such to every calm and attentive reader will undoubtedly appear the consistent doctrine of the whole volume of Holy Writ.—It is the suggestion of nature,—the still voice of reason wispereth it to us;—and the

the loud voice of God, his open Revelation, never hath and never will contradict it. Superiors, tho' of the highest class, tho' eminently styled *Supreme*, are thus related to their inferiors and subjects. Even that famous passage in the Epistle to the Romans, (c. xiii. v. 1.) strangely perverted as it hath been, to serve the purpose of lawless dominion and to flatter tyrants, clearly argues upon, nor can be understood without supposing a relative connexion. It declareth superior power to be "the ordinance of God," by Him appointed to deter the subject from evil work, to protect and praise the good (a). It declareth the superior Governor

(a) "Power, says the judicious *Hooker*, is then
 "of divine institution, when either God himself
 "doth deliver, or men by light of nature find out
 "the kind thereof. So that the power of parents
 "over children, and of husbands over their wives,
 "the power of all sorts of superiors, made by consent
 "of commonwealths within themselves, or grown
 "from agreement amongst nations, such power is of
 "God's own institution in respect of the kind there-
 " of.

verner to be "the minister of God for
 "good," and as such, that subjection is
 due to him "not only for wrath, but
 also for conscience sake,"—not merely
 from a dread of punishment, but because
 the thing is right and fitting in itself, is
 a moral religious duty—together with a
 just payment of "tribute, custom, fear,
 "and honour." But in case, that power,
 the "ordinance of God" appointed for
 these important ends, by sad inversion
 destroyeth them all—becometh a terror to
 good works and not to evil—"beareth
 the sword in vain," or worse than in
 vain, by discouraging the good, by pro-
 tecting the bad, by executing wrath upon
 the worthiest, and diverting their tri-

"of.—Subjection therefore is due unto all such pow-
 "ers, as they are of God's own institution, even
 "when they are of man's creation.—As for them
 "that exercise power altogether against order, al-
 "though the kind of power which they have may be
 "of God, yet is their exercise thereof against God,
 "and therefore not of God, otherwise than by per-
 "mission as all injustice is." *Eccles. Polity. B. viii.*
bute,

bite, fear, inferiority to sinister or unwarrantable purposes—what remedy is then to be had? what resource is there now remaining?—The Apostle indeed will not, (b) needs not tell us. But common reason, common sense point out such methods, as the Christian Religion no where forbiddeth mankind to use (c).

And

(b) The Apostle St. Paul, and all the Apostles, in imitation of their Lord and Master, preach moral and religious duties to individuals, but leave them to their own human laws and institutions, as members of civil or national communities.

(c) “ There is no necessity (says the judicious Hooker) that if I confess, I ought not to do that which the Scripture forbiddeth me, I should there-
“ by acknowledge myself bound to do nothing which the Scripture commandeth me not. For
“ many inducements besides Scripture may lead me to that, which if Scripture be against, they all
“ give place and are of no value, yet otherwise are strong and effectual to persuade.”—And afterwards the arguments turn thus—“ That, in civil affairs,
“ where there is no other law, custom itself doth stand for law; that, inasmuch as law doth stand
“ upon reason, to alledge reason serveth as well as

And all mankind, however chained in mind or body, yet when once become sensible of the pressure of such inverted power, have, wherever they durst, shaken off the cruel yoke, and asserted their freedom. No;—The Gospel never was designed to forge chains for, or to rivet them on its professors. It hath had a contrary effect, when its light hath not been hid, and its precepts have not been distorted and inverted.

The proof of this, clear and undeniable as it is, must be fetched from fact and experience, from the history of the Christian world, since the Gospel was dispersed and spread abroad.—From all this long period of History it appeareth, that a Christian Community never became slaves in a civil capacity, till religious thralldom was previously rivetted upon them, till the mind and conscience were

“to cite Scripture; that, whatsoever is reasonable,
“the same is lawful, whosoever is the Author of it.”

Eccles. Polity. B. ii.

first

first chained, and the true light of the Gospel hid as it were under a bushel, that the house might be darkened, and tyranny play all its game with the least hazard of detection or opposition.

The Gospel was “a light to lighten the Gentiles;” nay, to *lighten* the most enlightned Gentiles, since at the time of its publication, human learning and science were in their greatest height, and the most polite people of *Greece* and *Rome* hearkened to its doctrine, and rejoiced in the truth and glory it darted forth.—It is true, the world was then in subjection to the Emperors of *Rome*. It found tyranny triumphant, and its professors were forced with patience and magnanimity to submit to the cruel yoke. But in process of time, by enlightning every mind and enlarging every understanding, it “even led captivity captive”—and, then it must be added, “received gifts from men.”—But *gifts* ill-suited to its spiritual nature, which too much inflamed the human pas-

sions, gave too great a scope to avarice and ambition, taught numbers to damp its true light in order to obtain more, and made godliness at length a mere shew and the means of filthy lucre.

A series of events, fatal to the peace and welfare of mankind, successively contributed to favour the subtle selfish schemes of the Bishops of *Rome*.—Of these a principal, was the translation of the seat of empire into *Greece*.—The inundation of the Northern swarms had effaced the means of light and knowledge, and left behind in their room barbarity and ignorance. The see of *Rome*, once broke from the restraint of the civil power, and arrogating to itself preposterous empire over the minds and consciences of men, soon made superstition the engine of ambition, and planted servility and bigotry deep in the soil of ignorance and sloth. For several centuries together they sunk downwards from corruption to corrup-
tion

tion (d), rising proportionally higher at the same time in affluence and arbitrary power over faith. The Pope became the full-empowered Vicar of God, and implicit obedience was exacted to all his injunctions (e). The Scripture, that only repository

(d) "The progress the Papacy had made from Pope Gregory the VIIth, to Pope Boniface the VIII's time, in little more than 230 years, is an amazing thing: the one begun the pretension to depose Kings; the other, in the Jubilee that he first opened, (anno 1300) went in procession thro' Rome, the first day attired as Pope, and the next day attired as Emperor, declaring, that all power both spiritual and temporal, was in him and derived from him: and he cried out with a loud voice—*I am Pope and Emperor, and have both the earthly and heavenly empire*; and he made a solemn decree in these words, "*We say, define and pronounce, that it is absolutely necessary to salvation, for every human creature to be subject to the Bishop of Rome.*" Burnet's History of the Reformation, Vol. I. P. 2.

(e) "It is notorious that many Canonists (if not most) and many Divines of that party do maintain this doctrine, affirming, that all the power of Christ (the Lord of Lords and King of Kings)

pository of light and truth, was at length locked up from the Laity; and the Priests, to whom alone its reading was permitted, soon grew too ignorant to understand, or too knavish to publish its contents. To keep the world in darkness best served the purpose of those spiritual tyrants, who pretended to *damn* or *save* at pleasure or for price; and manifested the reach of their power, by imposing upon the world such monstrous points of belief, as that *they* could open *the gates of heaven and hell* at pleasure, at last that they could change even *bread* into *God*. Rational or truly Christian points were the only ones they did *not* teach. And bigotted or ill-designing princes co-operating with these spiritual tyrants, and sharing the power and profits with them, the whole *European* world was blinded in ignorance, infatuated by irreligious forceries, and fettered with the "Kings") to whom all power in heaven or earth appertains, is imparted to the Pope as his Vicegerent." Dr. *Barrow* on the *Pope's Supremacy*.
 "29m 21") double

double chains of spiritual and temporal bondage;

It was not till the sixteenth century, that the truth of the Gospel and Christian liberty began again to emerge from the Egyptian slavery and darkness to which they long had been doomed. But then they soon opened the eyes, enlarged the understandings, and enobled the thoughts of numbers in almost every nation. The invention of *printing* (f), providentially put in use sometime before, made the conveyance of sounder knowledge more easy and expeditious. *Rome* had already been alarmed at this useful means of enlightning the human mind, and exerted its formidable power to restrain its efficacy, by one while prohibiting upon the heaviest censures, the reading of some books, and expunging passages out of others (g). But, by translating the Scriptures

- (f) First in *Germany*, in the 15th century. "
- (g) Father *Paul* says, that " a better scheme
" never was invented to make men stupid, under
" the

tures into vulgar languages, those who were the first Reformers, had spread so much Christian truth and liberty, and so expeditiously abroad, that all the craft of *Rome* and the Monarchs who supported or shared her usurpations could not effectually stem the torrent. The Council of *Trent* (*b*), the last Council held by the creatures

“ the pretext of making them more religious. The
 “ Inquisitors went so far (under *Paul IV.*) as to
 “ prohibit all the books printed by sixty-two Printers
 “ whom they named, without distinction of languages, of authors, and of matter,—and what is more,
 “ all those, which were published by other Printers,
 “ who had printed any heretical works, insomuch
 “ that there was not left a book to read.”

History of the Council of Trent. B. vi.

(*b*) See the History of this Council by Father *Paul*, who says, that “ the court of *Rome*, which dreaded
 “ and eluded the holding of this Council, as the most
 “ efficacious means of moderating that exorbitant
 “ power, which by different steps was raised from
 “ most feeble degrees to an extravagance beyond all
 “ bounds, hath by it so confirmed her empire over
 “ that part which remaineth subject to her, that her
 “ authority never was so great, nor had ever struck
 “ so deep a root.”—His whole history is a continued
 proof

creatures of *Rome*, and the last probably that ever will be held, though managed with the utmost chicane and subtilty; the deepest intrigue and corruption by the agents of that court, rivetted the chains only faster upon those, who were so degenerated that they could no more be free, or were so terrified at the fires of Inquisition, that they durst not stir the least in their own preservation. (i).—Cer-

tain

proof of the caballing, intriguing, and artifice made use of by that politic court, to maintain and enlarge her spiritual tyranny.

(i) The decrees of this Council were readily received throughout *Italy*. *Poland* soon after submitted to them. They were next received in the large dominions of *Philip II.* King of *Spain*. In *Germany*, the Catholic Prelates and Princes received them also, though with large restrictions: but the weight and number of the Protestants would never suffer them to become a law of the empire. In *France*, the publication and formal acceptance of this Council could never be obtained, because the decrees of *discipline* encroach upon the temporal power of Princes, and the rights of the *Gallican* church. But in point of *doctrine*, the decrees have tacitly, or without passing the

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regular

tain it is, that delivering the Christian Religion from its long imprisonment, or opening the Holy Scriptures again to general study and meditation, preserved the liberties of *Germany* from being swallowed up by the all-grasping views of *Charles V*;—was the most efficacious means of rescuing *Holland* from Spanish slavery and its burning inquisition;—and, that *France*, by the assassination of two (*k*) Kings, and the most horrid massacre (*l*) of the Reformed, was not compleatly enthralled, till their late Monarch, after climbing gradually to a height of power,

regular forms, been generally adhered to and argued from, as establish'd laws. See Dr. *Courcier's* Appendix to *Father Paul's* History.

(*k*) Of *Henry III.* in 1589, by *Jaques Clement*, a Dominican Friar, because he joined with the *Huguenots* against the *League*.—Of *Henry IV.* in 1610, by *Ravaillac*, a Friar also, who at his examination boldly confessed he did it, because *the King did not take arms against the Huguenots, and that his making war against the Pope is the same as making war against God.*

(*l*) The massacre of *St. Bartholomew* in 1572.

contrary

contrary to all faith and humanity, revoked the Edict of *Nantz* (*m*), and drove many thousands of his best subjects into other countries, to practise truth among those who acknowledged it, and to be free among those who had vowed perpetual opposition to *Rome* and all its forceries.

I have been able but superficially to run over this large field of History, the whole of which to those who have leisure to examine it, most strongly convinceth, that the truth of the Gospel hath ever proved the best friend to all those rights, of which the great Creator and Parent of the moral world hath granted man the use, and in which are centred all the substantial worth of Religion, humanity itself, true rational freedom, and all the glory and dignity of the human nature.

Would

(*m*) In 1685. "The King (*Lewis XIV.*) says Father *Daniel*, after having reduced the *Calvinist* party by diverse edicts and declarations, at last gave them a mortal blow by the revocation of the edict of

Would we bring these truths home to ourselves and apply them to the history of our own nation, we shall find them rise brighter and clearer to our view.—

England was but in a piteous uncomfortable state before its *reformation* from the errors of *Popery*. Though not totally deprived of all its *civil* rights, yet it had lost all the *religious*, and was a prey to the fraud and avarice and witchcraft of superstition and blind devotion. That *Reformation* brought learning, art, and science after it. It taught us to know our worth, our dignity in the rank of creation, our duty in society, and all the laws of humanity, religion and God.—A cruel, bigotted and idolatrous Queen (*n*) endeavoured indeed to check this growing harvest, and strove to purge the nation of all that was valuable and good

Nantz, made in the year 1598, of the edict of *Nismes* in 1629, and all other edicts and declarations, which had been made in favour of the *reformed Religion*."

(*n*) *Queen Mary*.

by

by tortures and by fire. The Providence of God delivered us, and brighter times succeeded. Ever since, abating some short struggles, our Forefathers have "known the truth, and the truth" hath kept them "free." The free profession of the pure and uncorrupted Gospel of Christ hath been established amongst us; and from its study and use many blessings have flowed, which have made us the envy and wonder of the world. Not but the foes of liberty and true Religion, have ever been intent on confounding our peace, and destroying the invaluable portion we have enjoyed.—They got at length a Monarch (o) on their side, who aimed his blows thick and fast at all our civil and religious rights, but ~~these~~ so openly, that they were all turned aside; and the laws of God and Nature, obeyed by a discerning clear-sighted people, proved too hard for a Prince who had devoted himself to superstition and priestcraft, in order that they might return

(o) King James II.

him

him the favour, by helping him to enslave a *free* people. Truth and Liberty, which he would have exiled far from us, turned the tempest on his own head, and exiled him.—That *truth* we *since* have plentifully enjoyed, and all rational *freedom* hath been since our portion.—It is true indeed we have at times been alarmed, and *lately* more than alarmed, by the attempts of desperate and frantic men, to introduce a government amongst us, which must in the necessary train of things be destructive of all liberty,—and then, to establish a system of superstition amongst us, which would be destructive of true piety and sound Religion. But the members of this happy community, who know and value *truth*, would not be so supplanted and overturned. They have repelled the assaults, through the gracious concurrence of Providence, of ambitious encroaching potentates, of *pretenders* to rights which neither the laws of God nor man will justify.—They will never

never suffer, so long as they are true Christians, the pure light of the Gospel to be extinguished or even clouded in this nation, nor the natural and civil rights of a people who have dearly earned and well deserve them, to be born down and demolished by the tools of arbitrary power, and the emissaries of Rome, that forcerers of the earth.

They who lose their civil rights, lose half their worth;—But they, who are chained in mind and body both, are stripped of it all. They quite lose their rank in the scale of intellectual Beings. Their tyrants are beasts of prey, and *themselves* meer beasts of burden. One would think it impossible for human nature to fall so low. But when the light of *truth* is once lost, delusions and miseries crowd in apace.

Let us beware, how we once withdraw our attention from these most amiable.

ble, most worthy objects, *Truth* and *Freedom*.—Let us do our duty, not merely from a dread of *wrath* but from a willing and enlightned *conscience*, to our Religion and Laws, to our present King the true and only Guardian and Supporter of them, who according to St. Paul's description is "the Minister of God to us for good," and with whom *These* must stand or fall. In his, and in the cause of this whole community, the will of God hath illustriously declared itself.—May therefore our social, our political, and our religious conduct be such, that we may have constant reason to expect the exertion of the divine Will in our protection!—and may our Lord and Saviour, who taught us truth, inspire and assist us upon all occasions in its defence!

To conclude. From "calling any man our Father upon earth—from superstition—from idolatry—from the scourge of civil tyranny and wild arbitrary power—from

from every enemy to our peace, our welfare, our bodies, and our souls—may God Almighty for ever defend us!

To whom, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three persons and one God, be ascribed all honour, glory, dominion, and power, both now and evermore.

Amen.

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